



SEAPORT

NORTH CENTRAL IDAHO: CLEARWATER, IDAHO, LATAH, LEWIS, & NEZ PERCE COUNTIES

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Seaport's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in October decreased to 4.3 percent from September's rate of 4.9 percent. In October of 2001 the rate was also 4.3 percent. In spite of the decrease in the unemployment rate, *Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* increased only slightly in October. While total jobs increased by 100 from September 2002, there was no change from October 2001. October's increase in jobs was mainly as a result of increases in *Education*; however, the increase was only a normal seasonal adjustment as schools continued to gear up from summer vacation. Compared to October 2001, *Education* has decreased by 210 jobs. Holiday hiring has slowed this year with increases of only 50 jobs in *Wholesale Trade* from September to October 2002. The number of jobs decreased by 130 in *Retail Trade* year-over-year.

SPECIAL TOPIC

Senior Citizens in North Central Idaho

Increasing numbers of senior citizens are moving to North Central Idaho. The 65 years-and-older population exceeds the state average in Nez Perce, Clearwater, Idaho, and Lewis Counties in Idaho, and Asotin and Garfield Counties in Washington. See Seaport Table 2. The only counties in the region that go against the trend are Whitman (Washington) and Latah, where the university towns of Pullman and Moscow are located. Features many residents take for granted make this region ideal for retirement. In the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley the mild weather, long golfing season, and availability of a large hospital are among the draws. Anywhere in the region the price of homes and other necessities is moderate, especially in comparison to the West Coast. These senior citizens also make an impact on the economy. Businesses that serve seniors—health care, lawyers, and accountants—are growing more rapidly than any other part of the economy in North Central Idaho. Many health care employers are hiring workers and building additions. The number of jobs in health care has risen by 1,123, or 37 percent, in North Central Idaho in the last decade. At the same time, the number of nursing home and assisted living beds in

Seaport Table 1: Labor Force & Employment
Nez Perce County, Idaho and Asotin County, Washington

	Oct 2002*	Sept 2002	Oct 2001	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	34,970	34,580	34,010	1.1	2.8
Unemployment	1,520	1,710	1,460	-11.1	4.1
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.3%	4.9%	4.3%	-0.6%	0.0%
Total Employment	33,450	32,870	32,550	1.8	2.8
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	34,740	34,110	33,790	1.8	2.8
Unemployment	1,290	1,310	1,240	-1.5	4.0
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.7%	3.8%	3.7%	-0.1%	0.0%
Total Employment	33,450	32,800	32,550	2.0	2.8
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**	26,020	25,920	26,020	0.4	0.0
Goods-Producing Industries	5,080	5,240	5,280	-3.1	-3.8
Mining & Construction	1,340	1,490	1,450	-10.1	-7.6
Manufacturing	3,740	3,750	3,830	-0.3	-2.3
Food Processing	80	100	110	-20.0	-27.3
Lumber & Wood Products	660	660	710	0.0	-7.0
Paper Products	1,660	1,660	1,700	0.0	-2.4
All Other Manufacturing	1,340	1,330	1,310	0.8	2.3
Service-Producing Industries	20,940	20,680	20,740	1.3	1.0
Transportation	1,330	1,320	1,360	0.8	-2.2
Communications & Utilities	270	260	280	3.8	-3.6
Wholesale Trade	1,000	950	950	5.3	5.3
Retail Trade	4,850	4,830	4,980	0.4	-2.6
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	1,690	1,730	1,400	-2.3	20.7
Services	6,830	6,760	6,580	1.0	3.8
Government Administration	2,680	2,700	2,690	-0.7	-0.4
Government Education	2,290	2,130	2,500	7.5	-8.4
*Preliminary Estimate					
**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month					

Seaport Table2: Senior Population in North Central Idaho

Geographic Area	Total Population	Percent 65 years and older	Median Age (years)
State of Idaho	1,293,953	11.3	33.2
Idaho Counties			
Clearwater County	8,930	15.6	41.7
Idaho County	15,511	17	42.3
Latah County	34,935	9.5	27.9
Lewis County	3,747	18.5	42.5
Nez Perce County	37,410	16.5	38.1
State of Washington	5,894,121	11.2	35.3
Washington Counties			
Asotin County	20,551	16.3	38.8
Garfield County	2,397	20.9	43
Whitman County	40,740	9.2	24.7
Source: US Census Bureau 2000 Census			

the region has grown by 68 percent to 1,475. St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in Lewiston is one of the region's largest employers. The hospital has added 180 employees in the last 10 years. Approximately 40 percent of the patients admitted are on Medicare, the government program for people 65 years of age and older. The market doesn't appear to be saturated yet as several new developments are in the works. For example, Kelly Jackson of Grouse Flats, Oregon, is finalizing plans for 48 retirement apartments at 15th and Birch Streets in Clarkston, and Brookside Landing Retirement Center in Orofino is expanding to accommodate more seniors.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Clearwater County

- Phase 2 of the Orofino Industrial Park has been completed. The concrete foundation, stem walls, a five-foot sidewalk around the building, and paving of the entire site up to the cemetery has been completed, along with delivery of the building shell. The east side of the new building will consist of two commercial offices. Another section will include a conference room and storage rooms, while yet another 10,000-square feet will be open to manufacturing space for prospective light manufacturing customers. This section can be subdivided as needed. According to officials at the City of Orofino, interested tenants are looking for 3000- to 5000-square-foot spaces. The ASE Sign Company will occupy the second half of the structure, 15,000-square feet, at the far end of the building. On the downriver side, there will be a loading dock. The north side—the front of the building—will be built to resemble a storefront. Phase 3 of the project was put out for bids in mid-November. This phase will include all interior improvements to the building. The Orofino Industrial Park is a \$2.4 million project funded largely through grants.

Latah County

- The University of Idaho (UI) accounts for one half-billion dollars in sales in Latah County with students generating \$90.6 million in off-campus sales, according to a joint UI/Latah County economic impact survey, which was released in November. UI is the largest employer in Latah County; Washington State University is the second largest.

Nez Perce and Asotin Counties

- Regence BlueShield of Idaho laid off 14 workers at their Lewiston headquarters in November. The layoffs occurred at a time when Regence BlueShield of Idaho had seen its investment income decline. Regence has paid out more money in benefits than it's received in premiums, said Georganne Benjamin, spokeswoman for Regence BlueShield of Idaho. Income from stocks and bonds has helped the company fill the gap, but in recent months those investments didn't perform as well as they had in the past, Benjamin said. The reduc-

tions have no impact on the plans of the Regence Group to add as many as 150 new jobs in a new building at the business technology park near Home Depot. The eliminated jobs involved analyzing reimbursement rates for health care providers and renewing hospital contracts at Regence BlueShield of Idaho. Though the work is still being completed, the tasks were moved or consolidated into other positions, Benjamin said. "We have to continually review how we conduct business and make sure we are performing our administrative functions in the most efficient way possible for our members," Benjamin added. Between 20 and 30 of the new positions are currently being advertised. The new hires will handle claims processing for new customers of Regence affiliates in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and Utah. They will also assist with pharmacy benefits. As prescription drugs become a bigger percentage of health care expenses, more employees are needed to manage that area, Benjamin said. Until the new building is completed in February 2004, the new employees will work in Regence's existing Lewiston offices. Work is continuing on the 70,000-square-foot building at the business technology park. The site is being leveled and construction is expected to begin in April. In addition to the new employees, Regence BlueShield of Idaho is also moving more than 300 claims processing and customer service employees, who now work at the company's Bryden Avenue office, to the new site.

- Potlatch Corporation, the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley's largest employer, has announced it is cutting 51 of its 435 full-time salaried employees in Lewiston. They are among 106 workers company-wide who are losing their jobs. According to Potlatch Corporation officials, "We're constantly looking for ways to improve our competitive position and that means continual change is probably something we all need to look forward to. Change is not always negative. The things we are doing are not intended to make things worse, but to make things better." Secretaries, sales representatives, and supervisors are among those affected. In Lewiston, positions were eliminated in every section of the plant, including consumer products, pulp and paperboard, wood products (Clearwater Lumber), and the corporate office. All of the laid-off workers will be eligible for career counseling. Employees will receive severance packages depending on their job titles and length of service with the company. Potlatch expects to spend \$7.5 million to cover those and other costs associated with the announcement.

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